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Webster Says F.B.I. Has the State Dept. Under Investigation

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WASHINGTON, May 8 — The Federal Bureau of Investigation is investigating State Department employees in connection with security breaches at the American Embassy in Moscow, according to a letter that the F.B.I. Director, William H. Webster, sent to a senator today.

P The letter to Senator Ernest F. Hollings prompted the South Carolina Democrat to lift what he called a "hold" that he had placed on Mr. Webster's nomination to become Director of Central Intelligence. Thus the way was cleared for Mr. Webster's confirmation by the full Senate.

In his letter to Mr. Hollings, who had expressed concern that the bureau was not taking sufficiently aggressive action, Mr. Webster said the F.B.I. had been reluctant to reveal a pending investigation. He said, however, that "the F.B.I. has been investigating a number of current and former Department of State and other U.S. Government employees in connection with the U.S. Embassy Moscow situation."

He added that the investigation would focus on "all possible violations of Federal statutes," including whether employees had been guilty of "gross negligence" in permitting materials relating to national defense to be taken from the embassy.

'Full Cooperation' Cited

In his letter to Mr. Hollings, Mr. Webster said, "We have met with and have received the full cooperation of high level officials from the White House, Department of State and other agencies as appropriate."

Senator Hollings, a member of the intelligence committee who had voted to confirm Mr. Webster's appointment, also sent a letter to President Reagan, requesting a full investigation of civilian personnel at Moscow embassy.

A new element in the debate over security at the embassy was added today in an interview in The Washington Post in which the Navy Secretary, James H. Webb, said the former Ambassador to Moscow, Arthur H. Hartman, was partly to blame for Marine security lapses at the embassy by setting a permissive tone and "allowing extraordinary access to known K.G.B. agents."

Mr. Webb also said Mr. Hartman "had a complete arrogance toward counterintelligence" and "an indifference toward the environment which allowed the penetration by the K.G.B. to occur."

Mr. Hartman, who stepped down as Ambassador earlier this year, responded that Mr. Webb was "talking through his hat."

A State Department spokesman, Phyllis Oakley, said, "Public attacks against a distinguished Ambassador in the Department of State are damaging to a serious effort to investigate and remedy a problem important to our national interest."